

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SHB 1197

---

As of March 27, 2019

**Title:** An act relating to gold star license plates.

**Brief Description:** Concerning gold star license plates.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Representatives Riccelli, Irwin, Lovick, Barkis, Reeves, Blake, Ortiz-Self, Ormsby, Valdez, Bergquist, Mead, Fey, Volz, Chapman, Pellicciotti, Kilduff, Dolan, Sells, Maycumber, Shea, Griffey, Leavitt and Stanford).

**Brief History:** Passed House: 2/20/19, 95-0.

**Committee Activity:** Transportation: 3/26/19.

### Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires Gold Star license plates to be issued to all eligible applicants without payment of any vehicle license fees and motor vehicle excise taxes.
- Allows widows and widowers who are eligible to receive the Gold Star license plates but choose instead to receive a standard license plate or any other qualifying special license plate to be exempt from payment of motor vehicle excise taxes.

---

### SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

**Staff:** Bryon Moore (786-7726)

**Background:** The Department of Licensing (DOL) issues special vehicle license plates that may be used in lieu of standard license plates. Generally, special license plates are sponsored by a governmental or nonprofit organization and are available to all Washington residents for an additional fee that is due annually upon vehicle registration renewal. Other special license plates are available to individuals who meet certain requirements. One such special license plate is the Gold Star license plate, which may be issued to an eligible family member of a member of the United States Armed Forces who died while in service to their country, or as a result of their service.

---

*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

To qualify for a Gold Star license plate, a registered vehicle owner must:

- be a resident of Washington;
- provide proof to the satisfaction of DOL that they are an eligible family member to the deceased service member;
- provide certification from the Department of Veterans Affairs that they qualify for a Gold Star license plate;
- be recorded as the registered owner of the motor vehicle on which the Gold Star license plates will be displayed; and
- pay all fees and taxes required by law for registering the motor vehicle.

Eligible family members include:

- widows and widowers;
- biological and adoptive parents;
- stepparents;
- adults in loco parentis and foster parents;
- biological and adopted children; and
- siblings.

Gold Star license plates are issued without payment of any license plate fees and are replaced free of charge if a plate is lost, stolen, damaged, defaced, or destroyed. Widow and widower recipients of Gold Star license plates are exempt from annual vehicle registration fees for one personal use motor vehicle. Additionally, in lieu of a Gold Star license plate, a qualifying widow or widower may apply for a standard issue license plate or any qualifying special license plate for one personal use motor vehicle and be exempt from both annual vehicle registration fees and license plate fees for that vehicle.

Gold Star license plates may be transferred from one motor vehicle to another motor vehicle owned by the eligible family member upon application to DOL, county auditor or other agent, or subagent appointed by the director of DOL.

**Summary of Bill:** All qualifying applicants of the Gold Star license plate must be issued the plates without payment of any vehicle license fees and motor vehicle excise taxes in addition to the current exemption from payment of license plate fees. Widows and widowers who are eligible to receive the Gold Star license plates, but choose instead to receive a standard license plate or any other qualifying special license plate are exempt from payment of motor vehicle excise taxes in addition to the current exemption from payment of license plate fees and vehicle registration fees.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members:** No.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: This expansion is designed to honor the sacrifice of our fallen heroes and support the Gold Star families. Being recognized as a result

of having the Gold Star plates is another way to remember our loved ones. This legislation is also partially about clarifying the commitment to those that have given the ultimate sacrifice. This is a small token to show our gratitude.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Representative Marcus Riccelli, Prime Sponsor; Myra Rintamaki, American Gold Star Mothers of Washington State; Charlene Hawley, Gold Star mom; Shirley Schmunk, citizen.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** No one.